NATURAL NEWS

The Field Museum
Exploring
The Earth And Its
People

WEEKLY STAFF NEWSLETTER
May 23, 1997

CENTER FOR EVOLUTIONARY AND ENVIRONMENTAL BIOLOGY

ILLINOIS RAPID ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (IRAP) TO BEGIN THIS SPRING

The Office of Environmental and Conservation Programs (ECP) is preparing to launch IRAP -- a Rapid Assessment Program for Illinois. Funded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, IRAP is modeled after the successful, international Rapid Assessment Program created by Conservation International and Field Museum scientists in 1989.

In the tropics, RAP was developed to quickly and accurately fill on-the-ground information gaps in regions with high conservation potential. RAP assembles teams of expert field biologists and host country scientists to produce fast, first-cut assessments of the biological value (the degree of diversity, uniqueness and threat) of poorly known sites. RAP's goal is to identify high-quality - or the best - surviving examples of distinct natural communities, and while there is still time, bring these areas to the attention of local government and non-government agencies, international funders, and other key players guiding conservation action in the country.

In Illinois, IRAP will provide a fast tool to assess the condition of natural communities in Chicago Wilderness and the State. IRAP's goals are to help select critical sites for long-term monitoring of restoration activities, and to evaluate priority sites for additional protection and management. An immediate objective of IRAP is to identify several organisms that lend themselves to rapid assessments, and are good indicators of the type and condition of the natural community.

More than fifteen members of the Zoology and Botany Departments will be developing and refining methods for rapid inventories in temperate regions. Several groups of organisms are included in the multitaxa surveys: bryophytes, plants, fungi, land snails, beetles and other insects, spiders, amphibians and reptiles, and birds. Program Manager **Cathy Geraghty** (ECP) is coordinating all logistics. Efforts are being led by ECP Director **Debby Moskovits**, Conservation Ecologist **Doug Stotz** (both ECP), and Associate Curator and Chair **Greg Mueller** (Botany). Work is being done in collaboration with other local experts, at four Chicago Wilderness sites -- Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Swallow Cliff Woods/Cap Sauers, Green Lake Savanna, and the Lake Calumet region. The sites represent major natural communities in the region, including prairie, oak savanna, and wetland.

RAP RETURNS TO THE MADIDI REGION IN BOLIVIA

Last month, Conservation Ecologists **Doug Stotz** and **Robin Foster** (Environmental and Conservation Programs, ECP) led a team of seventeen Peruvian and Bolivian scientists -- who had been trained in rapid inventory techniques during the Conservation International/Field Museum field courses in 1995 and 1996 -- on a RAP to the Madidi National Park in Bolivia, which extends to the border with Peru. This 1.8 million hectare park was established by the Bolivian government in 1995 based on recommendations from the then newly formed RAP team, which had targeted this biologically unexplored region for its first trip in 1990. The Park encompasses a very diverse complex of natural communities, from highly threatened pampas grasslands and dry forests, to rich lowland rainforests, to endangered forested foothills of the Andes.

The Peruvian/Bolivian/US team surveyed birds, plants, mammals, reptiles and amphibians at a mountainous site -- from 400 to 750 m -- and at a grassland site, bordering Peru. At the end of the month-long fieldwork, **Debby Moskovits** (ECP) joined the team to help draft a report integrating the results from the different taxonomic groups and highlighting recommendations for conservation and management. These recommendations -- including new delineations for the border of the Park -- were presented in a public forum in Rurrenabaque, the gateway town to the Park on the Rio Beni. Attending the forum were the Director and several guards from the Madidi National Park, the mayor of Rurrenabaque, leaders of indigenous communities within the National Park, officials in the military, other local dignitaries, and representatives from the Federal government, Conservation International's Bolivia program, other conservation organizations, and ecotourist agencies in Bolivia.

Instrumental in the success of the complicated logistics were Kim Awbrey (Conservation International), **Tyana Wachter** (ECP), Parker/Gentry Award recipient **Fernando Rubio** (who helped with the logistics from the Peruvian side), and ATP graduate **Nuria Bernal** (who led the preparations in the Bolivian side).

The recommendations for the Park were well received, and are now being sent to the President of Bolivia. Another critical outcome of the trip was generated enthusiasm for the coordinated, binational management of the pampas grasslands, which is split by the Heath River into separate Parks.

AquaRAP

Associate Curator and Zoology Chair **Barry Chernoff**, (Zoology, Fishes) dazzled his audience on May 8 at a special Founders' Council program in the Rice Wildlife Research Station as he presented the findings of the first Aquatic Rapid Assessment Program (AquaRAP) to an audience of more than 160 guests. Based on its very successful terrestrial predecessor, AquaRAP provides a first-cut assessment of the biological value, as well as the priorities and opportunities for conservation. AquaRAP takes the river basin as the unit for conservation and attempts to uncover the maximum amount of conservation-related information -- biodiversity, uniqueness, unusual records -- in the minimum amount of time. Chernoff reported that the expedition, which

FIELD MUSEUM FAN MAIL

Before I go to heaven, of which I am certain, please accept my thanks for the Field Museum's splendid contributions to society.

Back in the early twenties my father provided service to the Museum through his Northwestern Electric Company in Chicago. Dad came to appreciate the depths and scope of the Museum's values and inspired his family to enjoy their offerings.

A good memory I have is of going with my family each Saturday morning by street car, 3¢ per child, 7¢ per adult, from Rogers Park to the Museum. We walked above/across railroad tracks, thrilled when running thru smoke emitted from engine stacks which of course "sooted" us (poor Mom) to reach the western door of the Museum in time to see movies of America's pioneering days. This was a special treat for little kids.

Over the years we became interested and educated with your many exhibits and functions of this great Field Museum. I have brought my 3 children and 17 grandkids to the Museum, knowing they will continue to use and love this Chicago treasure.

Your programs are wonderful, above all one can ask or think. Carry on and thank you.

An appreciative member 84 years young

TO IMPROVE THE *NATURAL NEWS*

Dear Readers:

My thanks to all who have responded to the questionaire, "To Improve the *Natural News*." The responses are still coming in, so I will wait until next week to summarize and print the results. I have been deeply impressed by the many thoughtful comments and suggestions for improvements. The questionaires are still available in the Mailroom for those of you who missed last week's issue. Please encourage your non-reader friends to fill one out, as I am very interested in hearing what would make the *Natural News* more attractive to them.

Why so much from Academic Affairs in this issue? The RAP programs are a significant initiative which will impact the Museum's work in many areas. The issue of *balance* in the *Natural News* coverage will be addressed when I summarize the results of the questionaire next week.

-- **Carolyn Klyce**, Editor

Deadline: Tuesday at noon, via E-mail (to klyce@fmppr.fmnh.org) or on disk.

took place in the basins of the Río Tahuamanu and Río Manuripi in Bolivia from September 2-27, resulted in specimens from over 325 species of fish, ten to twelve new species to science, and forty to fifty new records for Bolivia.

AquaRAP offers a new, multinational approach to conserving the largely neglected aquatic ecosystems, making aquatic communities the central focus, rather than allowing them to become side issues of terrestrial conservation. The conservation threats looming over the site of the first AquaRAP trip include road construction (cattle ranching, deforestation, burning), poisonous ashes and farm chemicals, exportation of food-fish resources and oil exploration. Conservation recommendations resulting from the AquaRAP trip include establishing an integrated-use region, with a protected core surrounded by areas with sustainable use of different resources; developing education programs with local communities to introduce low-impact economic alternatives for the region; establishing zones for sustainable harvesting and cultivation (food fisheries for local consumption, brazil nuts, rubber, ornamental fishes); and coordinating with neighboring Peru for larger basin conservation plans.

AquaRAP, like its terrestrial predecessor, is a joint program between Conservation International and the Museum's Office of Environmental and Conservation Programs. Working together, the two organizations can achieve their goal of making timely, science-based recommendations that succeed in being implemented by government and private organizations as effective conservation and management programs in the country.

SPECIAL THANKS to **Barry Chernoff, Margaret Ketchum, Dorothy Roder** and **Patti Stratton** & **MANY THANKS** to Audio-Visual, Design, ECP, Engineering, Fishes, Housekeeping, Maintenance, Photography, Printing, Security, Shipping, Special Events, Visitor Services and everyone else who helped make this event such a success.

VOIGHT RETURNS FROM SEA

Associate Curator **Janet Voight** (Zoology, Invertebrates) recently returned from a very successful ten-day cruise aboard Oregon State University's Research Vessel the WECOMA. Shiptime for the cruise was funded by an NSF grant to Joe Siebenaller of Louisiana State University to collect rat-tail fishes (Macrouridae). The areas from which specimens were collected overlie the Oregon Subduction Zone, where the Pacific Plate is being forced beneath the North American Plate. In this region, chemicals such as hydrogen sulfide and methane emerge from the seafloor and support chemosynthetic communities, called cold seeps, that are chemically and biologically similar to communities at hydrothermal vents. Voight succeeded in bringing back clams, tube worms and crabs thought to occur only in these chemically unusual areas. Five specimens of a family of finned octopod previously un-represented in our collections are now at The Field Museum, as are about fifteen benthic octopuses, most in near perfect condition. For a quick peak at some video images of the animals, check out the web site *(www.bmi.net/yancey/)* created by co-cruiser Paul Yancey from Whitman College.

WARD PRESENTS

On April 16 **Mary Ellen Ward** (Academic Affairs intern, and UIC undergraduate student) presented a lecture entitled "Multiple Data Sets and GIS" at the Illinois GIS Association 1997 Conference in Champaign. Mary Ellen spoke about various specimen collections and their distribution across a four state midwest region.

CENTER FOR CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND CHANGE

KLEIN TRAVELS TO ALANTA

Registrar **Janice Klein** (Anthropology), attended the American Association of Museums Annual Meeting in Atlanta last month, where she chaired meetings of the national Registrars Committee and the Council of Standing Professional Committees, one of three groups which advises the AAM Board of Directors. Klein was re-elected chair of the council for a second term. She also chaired a mentoring session for new museum professionals on "Colleagueship Outside the Job" and attended sessions on filming in museums, deaccessions, international loans and the exhibition of Native American Collections.

SPONSORED PROGRAMS

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announces the solicitation of proposals and plans to award a limited number of grants for the acquisition of research equipment, instruments or software for teaching/training and research centers of excellence in the application of remote sensing to regional or global integrated environmental assessments (NRA-97-MTPE-05). This NASA Research Announcement (NRA) is available electronically via the Internet on the Mission to Planet Earth Home Page *http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/mtpe/* under "MTPE Research Announcements" or via *anonymous ftp at: ftp.hq.nasa.gov/pub/mtpe* For more information, contact **Sophie Twichell** (x877).

NUTS & BOLTS

MAILING A LETTER?
NOT FROM THE NORTH LOT

The U.S. Post Office Box has been taken from the sidwalk by the north lot. A Post Office box remains in front of the Park District building on McFetridge. Our mailroom remains in the same place and processes lots of mail daily. Please have all out-going mail in the mailroom by 3:00 p.m. Thanks.

PHONE LIST CORRECTION

Petra Sierwald's extension is 841; **Daniel Summers'** is 839. These numbers were transposed by error in the recently-printed phone list. Sorry.

PARKING

PARKING will not be possible on old Lake Shore Drive over the weekend due to the Disney event.